4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

[P.22]

CHAPTER III

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

1. The field of modern marriage

581 MARRIAGE nowadays among the Ngoni still regulates the sexual activities of man and wife and determines the responsibility for the care of their young children, the inheritance of their property, and succession to office. To a lesser extent it still determines residence and establishes relationships between a partner to the marriage and his or her affines. It is an institution which involves sooner or later almost every Ngoni man or woman who survives into adulthood. The number of people who die adult and [826] unmarried is very small. Even albinos, who are regarded generally with disgust, usually succeed in marrying. The only people who 589 fail to marry at all are: seriously crippled people who are regarded as not strong enough to look after themselves; a few prostitutes who [548] acquire a reputation for wantonness before they have managed to find a husband and who live in a succession of temporary alliances with men in and around the township of Fort Jameson; and a category of persons known as 'quite useless people',[1] that is, people [828] who are mad or in some way deranged so that they are unable to settle down in any place and are always wandering about from village to village, begging shelter, beer and food.

A man who does not marry, or who remains divorced or widowed for many years, is regarded as unusual, and others say of him that he must smell like a he-goat so that no woman will have him. A man in his twenties without a wife is laughed at by the married women, who despise him as impotent. Very few men in fact stay long without a wife, and of people whose personalities are regarded as normal it is only a few old widowers who do not have a wife to cook for them and sleep with them. Some women stay for longer without a husband, partly because of the numerical preponderance [162] of women over men caused by labour migration.

128 Some idea of the extent to which marriage affects everyone sooner or later is given by Tables III and IV. These tables, like all the others in this paper, are based on information collected systematically from six Ngoni villages. Two of these villages, containing 257 and 121 142 residents, situated twenty-five miles apart and in different counties, were selected for me to live in by the county chiefs concerned. The remaining four villages containing 143, 104, 55 and 45 [621] residents, were close together but in a third county and twenty miles away from the other two.

[1] *Cisilu*, pl. *visilu*, or else *wantu watyalatyala*. Cf. Nsenga *silu*, pl. *masilu*, idiot.